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A NEW PORTRAIT OF LINCOLN

(See page 423)

AS bearing out our contention that the statue of Lincoln by George Gray Barnard is a colossal mistake in bronze, we present our readers with a reproduction of a new portrait of Lincoln painted by the veteran artist George H. Story, the existence of which we learned by accident.

We regard this as perhaps the finest half-portrait ever painted of Lincoln—above all because it shows that expression of commanding and hypnotizing alertness and fire in his eyes, of which a few of his photographs do give a hint and which common-sense suggests he must often have had, since he was able to conquer and hold captive the affection of so many people, high and low.

Mr. Story was born in New Haven, Conn. in 1835 and studied in that city under Charles Hine, later in Europe. He is an Associate of the National Academy and recipient of several medals for portraits and genre pictures. He was curator of the department of paintings at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, for seventeen years, acting director for one year, and since 1906 has been *curator emeritus*. He also is director of the art department of the Wadsworth Athenæum in Hartford. Three of his paintings are in the Metropolitan Museum: "The Young Mother," "Alexander S. Murray" and "Self Portrait."

In spite of his eighty-two years Mr. Story looks, acts and talks like a man of fifty-two—with every faculty wonderfully alert. He is a delightful story-teller and a charming host.

We asked Mr. Story to give us a few facts about Lincoln's appearance and the impression his personality made upon people when he was fully awake and grappling with the difficulties which the problem of the Civil War brought to his daily attention, and he writes as follows:

"I make no pretensions to any friendship or intimacy with Abraham Lincoln. I was only twenty-six years old when I met him the first time and he was fifty-two. I knew nothing of his experiences as a 'rail-splitter,' they were to me, as they were to him, the incidents of conditions in his life. He was a student from his childhood, a teacher in his youth, a lawyer in his early manhood and a statesman and president to the end of his life.

"His capabilities and noble ambitions made him a natural leader of men, and no other man with such a generous impulse ever occupied so high a position in public life, or fulfilled the obligations with which he was entrusted with greater fidelity to the trust imposed upon him by the people, and it seems presumptuous upon the part of any one to portray or record upon canvas the features and character of a man with such a history. And it was with much hesitancy and great reverence that I undertook the self-imposed task.

"Mr. Lincoln was too busy to spare the time to sit for me to paint his portrait, so I went to his office and sat there to observe him; thus I fixed the ever-changing expression of his face in my memory, and took notes as to his color and other characteristics, to use them in painting the portrait with the aid of photographs, sketches, etc., after studying him for weeks!

"But my recollections of the man were perfectly clear in my mind; and, as the notes which I had made in his presence were still in my possession, I determined to avail myself of the conditions, so, with the material in my possession, with the notes, sketches and photographs the portrait was commenced and carried to a conclusion.

"I may perhaps be excused if I say in entire frankness that not one of the painted portraits of Abraham Lincoln that I have ever seen possesses in any marked degree the fine qualities of his nature. All of the representations are in a measure resemblances or likenesses of his general physical appearance, but are seriously lacking in the mental quality and sense of latent power that formed the very essence of the man. Lincoln was possessed of a quiet dignity and poise, born of a conscious faith in his ability to cope with the important events as they developed in his active life. He knew himself to be able to direct and control those brilliant intellectual forces with which he had surrounded himself. Those statesmen whom he had summoned to meet him in council, at the beginning of his first administration, were not to be dictators of his policy, but the advisers and counselors only, as will be seen in a quotation from Ida M. Tarbell's 'Life of Abraham Lincoln' in which Lincoln writes to Secretary Seward in a letter dated April 1st, 1861:

"Wm. H. Seward, Esq.,

"My dear Sir:—

"Since parting with you, I have considered your paper dated this day, and entitled, 'Some Thoughts for the President's Consideration,' etc., etc."

"He closes this letter thus:

"Upon your closing proposition—that 'Whatever policy we adopt, there must be an energetic prosecution of it. For this purpose it must be somebody's business to pursue and direct it incessantly.

"Either the President must do it himself, and be all the while active in it, or

"Devolve it on some member of his cabinet. Once adopted, debates on it must end, and all agree to abide.' I remark 'that if this must be done, I must do it.'

"When a general line of policy is adopted, I apprehend there is no danger of its being changed without good reason, or continuing to be a subject of unnecessary debate; still, upon points arising in its progress I wish, and suppose I am entitled to have, the advice of all the cabinet.

"Your obedient Servant,
"A. Lincoln."

"It is inconceivable that a man of such power and occupying a position of such distinction should not have had stamped upon his countenance some visible evidence of his achievements. Also that Carpenter, and some others should fail to catch a gleam of the fire that surely burned within, when they painted his portrait, is singular.

"I met Abraham Lincoln the first time on February 23rd, 1861, in M. B. Brady's photograph studio where I had been asked to go and pose him for a portrait. This was the first picture for which he sat after his arrival in Washington after barely escaping assassination *en route*. My second view of Lincoln was nine days later when I stood within a few feet of him at the base of the buttress on the east front of the Capitol from which he delivered his first inaugural address.

"Our next meeting was at the White House

reception, where, falling in line, we moved forward slowly into what was then called the Green Room (I think). The President's tall figure was in striking contrast to the assembled guests as he stood there shaking hands and giving a kind word to many of them. When we reached the presence Mr. Lincoln took my wife's little hand in both of his with a cordial greeting, then looking up suddenly raised one hand and said distinctly to a tall young man who was attempting to slide through the room without speaking: 'Young man, no one passes through this room without shaking hands with the President!'

"Later on I received a commission to paint a cabinet head of Mr. Lincoln and through the courtesy of Mr. Nicolay I was graciously admitted on three occasions into the business office of the President while he was transacting business, and it was then that I obtained the lasting impression of the features and character of Abraham Lincoln I spoke of above. I had already seen him under varying circumstances and conditions. The most striking and impressive was at the time that Washington was cut off from communication with the North by the trouble in Baltimore. It was then that all good citizens were asked to go to the south side of the old Post-Office to listen to addresses from the President and members of his Cabinet. They spoke from a balcony on the south side of the Post-Office to an excited throng of people that had crowded into the narrow street below. Secretary Seward and Secretary Bates gave stirring speeches, and the President made a calm but very impressive address.

"For the purpose of defining my position I will quote from Ida Tarbell's 'Life of Abraham Lincoln,' Vol. I, page 294, which will illustrate in a measure the latitude allowed to the artist in an endeavor to set down the individual character of his subject. The changes and conditions are so varied and rapid in the lives of men of distinction that the emotions which control to-day are not those of yesterday, and are an intangible quantity, and it remains for the artist to determine for himself what the *predominant* expression is and thus adhere to that. Wholly objective painting in portraiture is characterless. Character painting without objective painting is futile. Selection is the life of all and this is entirely individual. Miss Tarbell remarks of his Burlington speech:

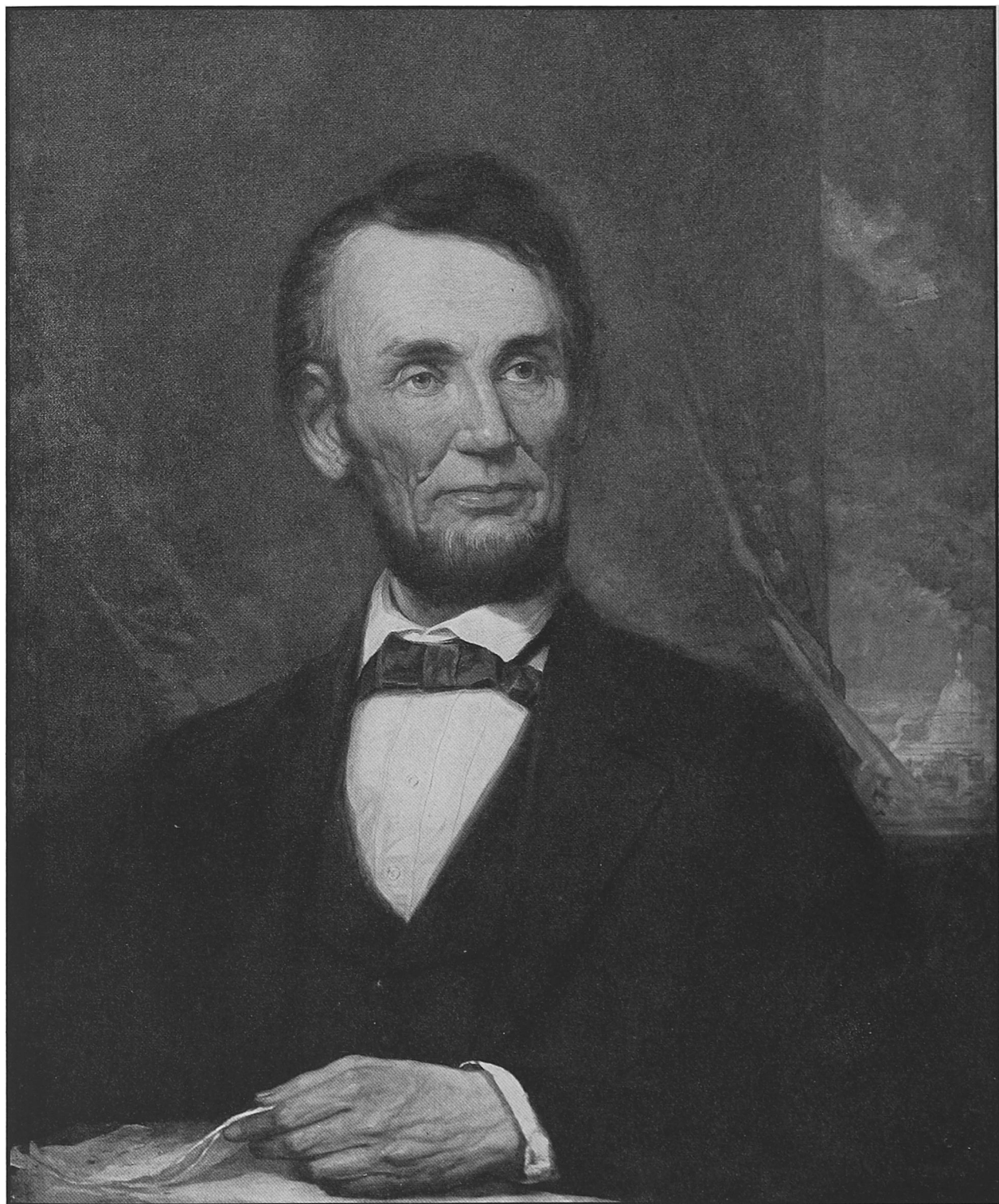
"He began his speech then, deeply moved, and with a profound sense of the importance of the moment. At first he spoke slowly and haltingly, but gradually he grew in force and intensity until his hearers rose from their chairs and with pale faces and quivering lips pressed unconsciously toward him. Starting from the back of the broad platform on which he stood, his hands on his hips, he slowly advanced toward the front, his eyes blazing, his face white with passion, his voice resonant with the force of his conviction. As he advanced he seemed to his audience fairly to grow, and when at the end of a period he stood at the front line of the stage, hands still on the hips, head back, raised on his tip toes, he seemed like a giant inspired.' 'At that moment he was the handsomest man I ever saw,' Judge Scott declared.

"It is false that Lincoln often looked sad. He rarely looked either sad or gay. He was usually *serene*, feeling no doubt the work of keying up all about him by being serene and self-controlled himself. He was never lugubrious. Most of the photographs of him are untrue and do him vast injustice. Usually, when he sat for a photograph, he was so absorbed with other far more important business that he had a preoccupied and often relaxed and heavy look, with his eyes sometimes half closed. But when he had important business on hand, such as a conference with his Cabinet, or Generals, etc., he was a changed man. Then he was erect, eyes wide open and sparkling with fire, and a sense of power radiating from his face that was extraordinary.

"Here are some notes I find in my note-book, taken in the White House in June, 1861.

"'Abraham Lincoln impresses me most seriously. His long dark hair falls in a wave down one side of his massive forehead, enveloping in part his large ears which stand boldly out on each side of his head. The forehead is broad and high, sloping backward soon after it mounts above the heavy eyebrows which overhang the deep cavities where the heavy eyelids hang over the eyes; these in color are of a soft gray, bordering upon the chestnut, with an expression as tender as possible, and when under no excitement, are rather inconspicuous, but when moved by extraordinary conditions, their character undergoes a great change. The pupils enlarge until they cover or nearly cover the iris. Then they assume a brilliant and decisive character that deters any further aggressive action on the part of his visitors. The nose is strikingly prominent and irregular, blunt at the end. The large mouth with its protruding under lip is a feature difficult to deal with: it is so full of expression and so individual, with its ever-waving lines, that not too much dependence can be put on the photograph. Watch its play and decide where and how its character can best be expressed. The lines in the photograph are all too heavy; clear them up and lose the lighter ones. The chin rolls up under the lips; soften the lines and blend the whiskers carefully. The general complexion changes with the effect of light. There are few carnation tints and only when under excitement. But then a glow of color and light illuminates his whole being. Drapery is black. *Hands and feet appear rather small for a man of his size, his feet are in fine, close-fitting calf-skin boots, his clothes of the finest broadcloth and well-fitting.'*"

Thus we see, from Mr. Story's notes, *made in 1861* for his private use at that time in making a portrait, that Lincoln did *not* have enormous hands and club-feet and that he was not a slouch, but that, as he says: "Hands and feet appear rather small for a man of his size" and "his feet are in fine close-fitting calf-skin boots." This shows that an artist with not only a naturally acute but a trained faculty for noting things, such as ordinary men do not possess, *observed and noted carefully*, in 1861 that Lincoln was not only not clumsy, but if anything elegant in form and dress—all of which bears out our contention that Mr. Barnard's statue is a libel on Lincoln.



A LITTLE KNOWN PORTRAIT OF LINCOLN
BY GEORGE H. STORY

(See page 421)